

received. The central server transmits the count of the most frequently matched signature element to the electronic mail server that transmitted the just received message signature. If the count meets a predetermined threshold, the electronic mail server marks the electronic mail message as bulk electronic mail.

In the claims:

Please amend claims 1, 3, 5, 10, 19, 26, 28, 29, 32, and 33 as follows.

1 1. (Amended) A method of managing electronic mail, the method comprising the steps of:
 2 automatically generating a set of criteria based on contents of a plurality of electronic
 3 mail messages received over a network;
 4 wherein the step of automatically generating a set of criteria includes, in response to
 5 determining that a threshold number of said plurality of electronic mail messages
 6 have a particular content, generating criteria that classifies electronic mail
 7 messages that have said particular content as a first type of electronic mail;
 8 receiving an electronic mail message over said network;
 9 determining whether said electronic mail message satisfies said set of criteria;
 10 if said electronic mail message satisfies said set of criteria, then processing said electronic
 11 mail message as said first type of electronic mail; and
 12 if said electronic mail message does not satisfy said set of criteria, then processing said
 13 electronic mail message as a second type of electronic mail;
 14 wherein said first type of electronic mail is processed differently than said second type of
 15 electronic mail.

1 3. (Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein determining that a threshold number
 2 of said plurality of electronic mail messages have a particular content includes

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4-A4
determining that at least a portion of each of said plurality of electronic mail messages have said particular content.

1 5. (Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of generating a set of criteria based
2 on contents of a plurality of electronic mail messages received over said network includes
3 the steps of:
4-A5
5 generating message signatures for each electronic mail message of said plurality of
6 electronic mail messages, wherein each message signature includes one or more
7 signature elements; and
8 counting how many of said one or more signature elements match signature elements
9 from other message signatures.

1 10. (Amended) A method of managing electronic mail, the method comprising the steps of:
2 a central server receiving from an electronic mail server a message signature generated
3 from an electronic mail message;
4-A6
5 an electronic mail server determining whether said message signature satisfies a set of
6 criteria based on message signatures previously received by said central server
7 from a set of electronic mail servers;
8 wherein said set of criteria classifies said electronic mail message and a threshold number
9 of electronic mail messages as having a particular content;
10 if said received data satisfies a set of criteria, then said electronic mail server processing
said electronic mail message as a bulk electronic mail message.

1 19. (Amended) A method of managing electronic mail, the method comprising the steps of:
2 receiving an electronic mail message over a network;
3-A7
4 generating a message signature for said electronic mail message by applying contents of
said electronic mail message to a function that produces said message signature;

5 determining whether said message signature satisfies a set of criteria that indicates said
 6 electronic mail message and a threshold number of electronic mail messages have
 7 a particular content;
 8 if said message signature satisfies said set of criteria, then processing said electronic mail
 9 message as a first type of electronic mail; and
 10 if said message signature does not satisfy said set of criteria, then processing said
 11 electronic mail message as a second type of electronic mail.

1 26. (Amended) A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of one or
 2 more instructions for managing electronic mail, wherein the execution of the one or more
 3 sequences of the one or more instructions causes the one or more processors to perform
 4 the steps of:
 5 automatically generating a set of criteria based on contents of a plurality of electronic
 6 mail messages received over a network;
 7 wherein the step of automatically generating a set of criteria includes, in response to
 8 determining that a threshold number of said plurality of electronic mail messages
 9 have a particular content, generating criteria that classifies electronic mail
 10 messages that have said particular content as a first type of electronic mail;
 11 receiving an electronic mail message over said network;
 12 determining whether said electronic mail message satisfies said set of criteria;
 13 if said electronic mail message satisfies said set of criteria, then processing said electronic
 14 mail message as said first type of electronic mail; and
 15 if said electronic mail message does not satisfy said set of criteria, then processing said
 16 electronic mail message as a second type of electronic mail;
 17 wherein said first type of electronic mail is processed differently than said second type of
 18 electronic mail.

28. (Amended) The computer-readable medium of Claim 26 wherein determining that a threshold number of said plurality of electronic mail messages have a particular content includes determining that at least a portion of each of said plurality of electronic mail messages have said particular content.

29. (Amended) A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions for managing electronic mail, wherein the execution of the one or more sequences of the one or more instructions causes the one or more processors to perform the steps of:

a central server receiving from an electronic mail server a message signature generated from an electronic mail message;

an electronic mail server determining whether said message signature satisfies a set of criteria based on message signatures previously received by said central server

from a set of electronic mail servers; and

wherein said set of criteria classifies said electronic mail message and a threshold number of electronic mail messages as having a particular content;

if said received data satisfies a set of criteria, then said electronic mail server processing

said electronic mail message as a bulk electronic mail message.

32. (Amended) A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions for managing electronic mail, wherein the execution of the one or more sequences of the one or more instructions causes the one or more processors to perform the steps of:

receiving an electronic mail message over a network;

generating a message signature for said electronic mail message by applying contents of

said electronic mail message to a function that produces said message signature;

8 determining whether said message signature satisfies a set of criteria that indicates said
9 electronic mail message and a threshold number of electronic mail messages have
10 a particular content;

11 if said message signature satisfies said set of criteria, then processing said electronic mail
12 message as a first type of electronic mail; and

13 if said message signature does not satisfy said set of criteria, then processing said
14 electronic mail message as a second type of electronic mail.

1 33. (Amended) The computer-readable medium of Claim 32, wherein:

2 the step of generating a message signature includes invoking a first set of routines that
3 perform said function; and

4 the computer-readable medium further includes sequences of instructions for performing
5 the steps of:

6 receiving code from a remote server, and

7 updating said first set of routines based on said code.